

## **LAWRENCE-DOUGLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

200 Maine, Suite B

Lawrence, Kansas 66044-1357

Office: 785/843-3060 Fax: 785/843-3161

Clinic: 785/843-0721 Fax: 785/843-2930

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CONTACT: W. Kay Kent, RN, MS  
Administrator/Health Officer  
(785) 843-3060

### **Cryptosporidiosis Investigation Continues**

In collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Kansas Department of Health and Environment and the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department, a telephone survey is being conducted with community members, both ill and well, to determine how individuals may have become exposed to Cryptosporidiosis. To date, 100 surveys have been completed with plans to complete 400 to 500 total surveys.

Residents are encouraged to participate in the survey. We realize that some community members may have already spoken with the Health Department, however, we are interested in finding out more about this illness so we can learn more about preventing and controlling cryptosporidiosis in the future. The questionnaire asks about activities interviewees have taken part in that may have increased their risk for becoming ill. The questionnaire asks about food and drink consumption, swimming activities, travel, animal contact, contact with ill persons, etc. Participation in the 30-minute survey is voluntary and the information collected is confidential. If you have questions about the survey, please contact Charlotte Marthaler, Director of Policy and Planning, at (785) 843-3060.

In partnership with daycare facility directors, CDC researchers are conducting an observational study at selected daycare facilities. The purpose of the study is to learn more about how to prevent cryptosporidiosis from spreading in the daycare setting.

The Health Department continues to recommend the following to protect community members:

- High Risk Individuals:
  - Immunosuppressed persons (undergoing cancer treatment, HIV/AIDS, organ transplant recipients and/or receiving steroid treatment) should be vigilant in following prevention guidelines as *Cryptosporidium* can cause life threatening, chronic diarrhea in persons with weakened immune systems.
  - Persons ill with *Cryptosporidium* should avoid close personal contact with persons with weakened immune systems (see above). If persons with weakened immune systems become infected, *Cryptosporidium* can be a life-threatening disease.

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- Children and pregnant women should take care to drink plenty of fluids to avoid the dehydration from diarrhea caused by *Cryptosporidium*. They should consult a health care provider for information on preventing dehydration.
- Hygiene:
  - Wash hands regularly with soap and water, especially after using the bathroom and before preparing food.
  - Wash hands after changing diapers.
  - Take extra care to wash hands and clean surfaces if caring for someone with diarrhea, especially diaper-or toddler-aged children.
- Day cares:
  - Children with diarrhea should not be dropped off at daycares.
  - Employees with diarrhea should be excluded from work.
  - Wash hands after every diaper change, even if wearing gloves.
  - Refrain from using swimming pools, water tables and other water-based activities while the outbreak is ongoing.
  - Work with children so they wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after using the toilet and before handling or eating food.
- Swimming:
  - Do not swim when ill with diarrhea or for two weeks after the end of diarrhea. *Cryptosporidium* is chlorine resistant.
  - Do not swallow pool/lake/river water.
  - Practice good hygiene (i.e. shower before swimming).
- Drinking Water:
  - Avoid drinking untreated water from shallow wells, lakes, rivers, springs, ponds and streams.
- Restaurants:
  - Employees should wash hands after using the bathroom and before preparing food.
  - Employees with diarrhea should be excluded from food preparation activities.

For more information, individuals may call the Health Department at (785) 843-0721.

**Note to News Editor:** The current volume of information regarding the *Cryptosporidium* outbreak no longer necessitates twice weekly news releases and briefings. News releases will be distributed in the future as new information is available. Kay Kent, Administrator/ Health Officer, will remain the contact person for media inquiries for the Lawrence Douglas County Health Department if questions arise. She may be reached at 785-843-3060.